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highest in ourselves—only, in God, it must be on a still higher scale—not on a lower. Of course God's consciousness cannot be ours. It is ours with the condition of infinity added to it—that is, it is unconditioned, infinite, transcendental. What it actually is like, we can hardly describe. Because it has no like. It is unique. We can only say of it that it is something that corresponds on the infinite scale to our consciousness on the finite scale. It is that from which finite consciousness can be evolved. It needs, perhaps, the subtlety of a German to help us out here. Kant tells us that God's consciousness is free from the limitations of space and time; and that therefore it is not thinking. He calls it "primitive intuition."⁸ Dr. Carus says that God is super-personal. So do I. But this is my idea of super-personality. I think Dr. Carus ought to come round to it without much difficulty. I should rejoice if he could.

W. E. AYTON WILKINSON.

BURMA, INDIA.

THE OLD AND THE NEW.

IN REPLY TO MR. W. E. AYTON WILKINSON.

Among our subscribers of long standing, there has scarcely been a more careful and faithful, and (we must add) more critical reader than Mr. W. E. Ayton Wilkinson, of Thanatpin Burma, in distant India. He was critical because he did not agree with our editorial position which he regarded as rank materialism, he himself being a spiritualist, not of the crude and credulous kind that seek comfort in the seances of mediums, but a thinker who endeavored to base his conviction upon a philosophical foundation. We have exchanged many letters, and several articles of his have appeared in *The Monist*, all of them attacking the editorial views as to the nature of the soul, of consciousness, and of immortality. They were all thoughtful and presented arguments worthy of consideration and answer.

Though personally a stranger, his letters have exhibited a warm friendship, and he lived in the hope of converting us to his views. The last contribution from his pen appears in the current number and we regret to add with great sorrow, that while his article was standing in type and before we sent him proofs, we received the unexpected news of his death.

⁸ I do not know German myself; and Mahaffy's and Bernard's Kant is the only edition I have.

I may be permitted to add a few personal remarks. Mr. Wilkinson knew me sufficiently to be certain that I would not hesitate to publish his criticism and he said exactly what he meant. He is impatiently severe and it is greatly to be regretted that he cannot see his article in print and feel the satisfaction of having had his say in all its vigor and directness. I must confess that while reading the manuscript I enjoyed his outspoken expressions which are the more noteworthy as they come from a kind heart. He has always manifested an unusual sympathy for me whom he regarded as the most dangerous opponent of his deeply cherished convictions.

We know little of Mr. Wilkinson's personal affairs, except that he was a mechanical engineer and a thoughtful student of psychology. He took a great interest in the labors of the Society for Psychical Research of England, and always regarded it as an unpardonable negligence on our part that we did not devote more space to their proceedings and other publications. Why we have not done so ought to have been obvious to him, who himself lays more stress upon philosophical reasons than upon scattered facts, or, as he calls them, "scientifically demonstrable arguments of the truth."

Mr. Wilkinson is mistaken, however, when he imagines that I have neglected to consider the methods and results of the S. P. R. I have said little about their work because I have no reason to hinder their investigations, or to dampen the zeal of those well intentioned (but in my opinion strangely mistaken) seekers after truth. The fact is that I have not discovered much that is worth mentioning. The results are all of a negative character which, if they prove anything, indicate that their method is futile. Still I wait for further developments and will not hesitate to call attention to anything that would seem of importance to me.

Mr. Wilkinson is further mistaken in thinking that I have not reviewed Mr. Frederic H. Myers's voluminous work on *Human Personality: Its Survival After Bodily Death*. In addition to the comment from which Mr. Wilkinson quotes, it was reviewed in *The Open Court*, May 19, 1903 (Vol. XVII, p. 308 f.). Moreover I have discussed somewhat at length the experiments made by Professors James and Hyslop with Mrs. Piper and can say only that they are typical of a large number of trance phenomena, so called. They prove nothing more than does Mr. Abbott's "Strange Case" which is interesting only because so much has been made of it by Psychical Researchers; but which I consider (and so does Mr. Abbott) as much of a failure as all the work of the S. P. R.

Now when considering Mr. Wilkinson's strictures, I find that aside from some vigorous protests made in strong language, he offers no tenable arguments whatever, and it is characteristic of him that the ultimate basis of his views is not reached by thought but by sentiment. He is a pragmatist. He believes because he has the will to believe. His psychology has its roots in his attitude toward the world as a whole, and his philosophy is not of an intellectual nature. Attitudes can be neither refuted nor proved; they are subjective.

In the present case, far from rejecting Mr. Wilkinson's attitude, I am inclined to recommend it. I had the same attitude and also the same mode of adjusting my philosophy to it in my younger years, and my present attitude is merely the result of broadening and adapting myself to a deeper insight into the nature of things.

Mr. Wilkinson says:

"All true philosophy must, to my mind, be based upon one axiom and one only—namely that the universe has a meaning. Despite all its apparent inconsistencies and contradictions, we must believe, if we are not to be put to intellectual confusion, that it is really one harmonious whole. And our business as philosophers is simply to discover the system on which it is built—the key that shall explain it all. To assume that there is a system, and then to search for it."

I am prepared to go a step further than Mr. Wilkinson. To me it is not an axiom but a demonstrable truth that the universe is "one harmonious whole" and I have always insisted that "the universe has a meaning." The order of the world (which appears most obviously in the so-called laws of nature) constitutes a system. This system can be traced by science, and furnishes the basis of ethics as well as of religion. Without it could exist neither science, art, morality, nor any of our ideals. It is much more than a mere logical proposition, it is an objective norm; it is the condition of all order, all harmony, the possibility of human personality and of all the grand aspirations which adorn it and make man's existence valuable. In a word, it is what religion calls "God."

Now the difficulty which besets Mr. Wilkinson consists exactly in this: he clings to the symbol or allegory under which this ultimate foundation of the dignity of our existence is conceived. Otherwise we agree. With him I would say, "My soul does not belong here or now; it belongs to God."

Our lives are transient. Every action of ours, every joy, every sorrow, every event be it good or bad, sinful or virtuous, passes by,

and though its traces will linger, the time will come when this whole earth will be no more and we shall be as if we never had been. But the value of our lives does not lie in the number of years, nor is it on the other hand impaired by shortness. Our lives are to be measured by quality of life rather than by quantity of time, and Mr. Wilkinson is quite right when he says, "What is a million years? What is time itself in the life of the universe? A million years is much the same thing as five minutes."

What gives worth to our lives is not quantity but quality, and the quality that elevates us is exactly the eternal background of which we are, or ought to be, the incarnation. Buddha calls the divinity after which we all aspire, the Dhamma, and expresses it thus in some stanzas of the Dhammapada:

"If one should live an hundred years,
Ignorant, discomposed,
Better to him were life one day
Intelligent, enrapt.

"If one should live an hundred years,
Inert and weak of will,
Better to him were life one day
Exerting will-power strong.

"If one should live an hundred years,
Not seeing the highest Doctrine,
Better to him were life one day
When seeing the highest Doctrine."

Mr. Wilkinson says in criticism of my views, "What possible purpose could there be in forever bringing worlds into existence one after another, just to wipe them out again? I live for you and you live for me, and you and I live for posterity and they for some other posterity and so on. And one day there won't be any posterity and what then? What, I ask, is the value of life as life, and you can only reply, NONE."

Mr. Wilkinson forgets that the background of all life which he calls the system of the whole and which I fully recognize, is to all practical extent identical with what in monotheistic religions is called God. It is true enough that I live for you and you live for me and we both live for posterity, and that our interests are mutually balanced so that no one lives for himself alone. The center of gravity lies outside of us, and the farther away it lies from any person the better it is. Woe to him who tries to have the center of his existence in his own puny little self. Egotism is not a system

which recommends itself. It will never satisfy our heart's desire and will leave us as empty as a bubble. When its race is run it will burst and leave nothing behind. It is exactly the significance of its interconnections which gives value to life and makes life's purpose endure.

But we must not forget that all the play of human activities with their mutually balanced interests between you and me and others would be mere nonentities were they not understood to be the surface only of that unfathomable ocean of life which is God, the eternal world-order, the norm of All-Being, the standard of right and wrong, the origin and prototype of our highest ideals, and the final goal to which we return. This unfathomable ocean of which we are the mere surface billows is not a nonentity. Though it is not a bodily or material existence, it is the quintessence of our lives and has been felt to be such by mankind since the most primitive beginnings of civilization. Here lies the root of all religions and I recognize the omnipresence of this eternal norm even though I would reject as mere allegories the definitions and symbols in which myths and dogmas express it.

In the sense of this God-conception, we must read the meaning of our own personal existence. Though there is no individual self, such as Mr. Wilkinson hankers after, I do not hesitate to say that man's soul is an actuality and its significance extends as far as its interests, its sympathies, its comprehensions will reach. Our souls are built up of our ideals, our sympathies and our interests, and as they manifest themselves in our labors and aspirations they are not limited to our bodily existence. Our souls extend wherever our influence goes and so they will live

"Or ever the silver cord be loosed,
Or the golden bowl be broken,
Or the pitcher be broken at the well,
Or the wheel broken at the cistern.

"And the dust return to the earth,
As it was;
And the spirit return unto God
Who gave it." *

Spiritualists, even those who like Mr. Wilkinson are thinkers, are practically materialists. They cling to the symbol and forget its significance. They overrate the part which consciousness plays, and overlook the fact that the main feature of the soul consists in its

* Eccl. xii. 6.

thinking, not in its feeling, its sentiency, nor in whatever else belongs to the senses. Consciousness is needed for thinking. It is an instrument but not an end. It is the concentration of feeling (of sense activity) upon one point to which our attention for some or any reason is to be directed. The final purpose of it is to throw light upon the path of life so as to enable us to take the right step and advance in the right direction. Consciousness serves as a searchlight which illumines the field of vision, but is as such transient and secondary. Its main purpose is to gain insight and to discover the truth.

Mr. Wilkinson is a typical representative of many serious people who seek the truth, who know by intuition the significance of religious truths who know especially that the soul is worth more to us than anything in the world. The soul is we ourselves and the Biblical saying remains true, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Mr. Wilkinson feels that the great religious truths of the dignity of the soul, of immortality, of moral ideals, would slip away from him if he gave up his soul-conception, and he is so accustomed to the one in which he has been educated that my broader view appears to him purely negative, and I do not think it would have been possible for him to see the deeper meaning of my conception of God, soul, and world though it is perhaps much nearer to his own than he could comprehend. I myself, passed through a long period of despair in which I thought that unless God was exactly as I had pictured him in my childhood, there was no God at all; and if immortality was not exactly the immortality which Christian mythology pictures, it would not and could not afford us comfort. But the world is deeper than we have thought. God is greater than dogmatic religion represents Him to be; our souls are still linked with eternity and before us opens a vista of infinitude.

EDITOR.